

Meeting Minutes

RED ROCK DESERT LEARNING CENTER CORE GROUP

Bureau of Land Management

Tuesday, January 18, 2005

The meeting commenced at 9:40 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Loretta Asay, Kathy August, Kim Blanc, Allison Brody, Paul Buck, Bill Cates, Nancy Flagg, David Frommer, Laurie Howard, Megan Iudice, Michael Johnson, Jeanne Klockow, Richard Leifreid, Tim O'Brien, Alan O'Neill, Jackson Ramsey, Michael Reiland, Henry Tom, Pamela Vilkin, Les Wallach, Debbie Wright, Billie Young.

1. Introductions

The group welcomed Allison Brody of UNLV.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 16, 2004, meeting were approved with no changes.

3. Presentation of Science Curriculum

Dr. Paul Buck, chair of the Educational Programs Committee, presented the results of the Biology/Life Science strands that one of the working groups within his committee recently finished. Paul reviewed the process that culminated in this work. Beginning with the original round 4 nomination, a group of scientists and teachers became interested in setting the framework for the kind of science studies that would happen at the school. A key consideration was the BLM mission to sustain healthy ecosystems. Initially, a group of science faculty from Desert Research Institute and UNLV met to discuss science concepts that students should know. Then, DRI secured a grant to work with Clark County School District teachers to write the science curriculum. The broader committee was divided into two working groups (physical/earth science and life science/biology). These groups worked independently for approximately 6-8 months using school district science standards as a guide. The products of the two working groups were then reviewed by the Educational Programs Committee then provided to the Core Group for review and feedback. Paul emphasized that it was not the role of the committee to develop detailed curricula; the overall goal was to build the framework around which the school operator will develop engaging, hands-on activities for students.

Each curricular strand is formed around a key question. The content is tied to FOSS kits used in Clark County schools and includes identified activities, a site, equipment, and the approximate time to complete the activity. All students will use science notebooks and will be asked to do an oral or written presentation for their group. The curriculum strands also suggest multi-cultural, historical, or social connections and are tied to national GLOBE (Global Observations in the Environment) protocols. GLOBE is a long running program jointly offered by the Environmental Protection Agency, National Science Foundation, and many universities. GLOBE protocols are a method by which students and teachers can participate in environmental research projects by using national data collection standards.

Loretta Asay said that she was impressed with the curriculum. Paul praised the excellent group of teachers who helped develop it. He added that there is a tight linkage between the facility and the curriculum, and the operator will be tasked with making it work. Michael Reiland thanked the committee for its work. Jeanne Klockow agreed with Loretta that the committee had done phenomenal work. As RRDLC curriculum coordinator, she will now integrate the science strands

with the common experiences previously identified by the Core Group. By the next Core Group meeting she anticipates having a chart that shows how the integration might work. The overall goal will be to provide a vision of what the total school curriculum might look like, including night sky, wild horse and burro, etc.

4. Presentation on Schematic Design

Henry Tom and Les Wallach of Line and Space Architects provided an update on the schematic design for the desert learning center. The architects made a presentation to the Building Committee about a month ago. During the week of January 24, 2005, the schematic designs will be reviewed by a group of value engineers and BLM personnel. The next phase of the project is called design development, where the engineering of the facilities will receive significant focus. Line and Space has written the initial protocols for each building in terms of energy design and use. These protocols have been sent to BLM's Denver office.

Les Wallach reviewed the overall site plan with the Core Group and noted changes since the last presentation. The trails have now been flagged on the site. An area of carts and restrooms have been added at the friendship circle, with plans to feature an exhibit on wastewater there. The friendship circle is now a stand-alone facility that could potentially be rented out.

Plans now call for retaining the walls of the historical structures at full height as well as the building footprints. The roofs will be replaced with overhead umbrellas on steel structures. The old tack room will be used as a storage room. As an additional learning venue, a flex lab has been added at the Whispering Bent Springs, which flows 3-6 months a year.

Allison Brody asked how trees will be protected during construction. Les said the work will have to be highly supervised with a contractor who is sensitive to this issue. Setting a two-year construction period, rather than one year, may be an option to allow sufficient time for protecting existing vegetation.

Loretta Asay asked about security on the service roads. Les replied there will be a security system overlay in the next set of plans. Most likely it will include a front gate with key card access, monitored by video. The entire site will have barbed-wire fencing around its perimeter. Michael Reiland added there may also be a secondary system to prevent access to the maintenance yard even if initial access to the property is granted.

Kathy August asked about the public access trail adjacent to the property. Les noted this as an ongoing concern. There is a teaching venue planned nearby that will put the children in proximity to the public access trail, but it will be kept to a minimum.

Bill Cates asked about the location of the children's play area. It is still planned for the north end of the property.

Les then reviewed plans for individual buildings on the site.

- Bus Drop-Off – 3 bays for bus unloading, possibly a wind-driven piece of art (if budget allows).
- Friendship Circle – will hold 140 people; now includes bathrooms.
- Dining Facility – more bathrooms added, series of inside terraces, gear room, kitchen, loading dock, outside terrace, anteroom that could be rented out for other purposes, solar bridge to the flex labs.

- Greenhouse – in proximity to the dining facility to enhance composting possibilities, tanks for using harvested water.
- Dormitories – loft space with different sleeping alternatives, designed for 35 kids grouped by gender, bathrooms underneath, flex room with traditional beds, central gathering space, chaperone rooms, measurable utilities.

Pam Vilkin asked how the dormitory space will work for adults when the center is used by other groups. Les replied nothing is kid-sized in the dormitories. Adults would use sleeping bags. Pam asked if all planned shade structures will be manufactured in steel. Les said yes. Pam asked if the architects have thought about making even a small section of the bead walls visible to the children. Les said they have considered various options for doing that and will continue to think it through.

- Flex Labs – Insulated boxes designed the same and differentiated by the way they are stocked. Total of 4 plus an adult research lab with 3 stations for scientists. Entry by 9-foot wide solar bridge, bathrooms were added, small library included.

Paul Buck asked if, other than drilling holes for flex lab pylons, there will be any other modification to the wash channel. Les said the labs will not be in the channel.

- Instructor Housing – helps subsidize the operation of the facility. Will be built if the budget allows and if it fits the operator's business plan. Designed like a village, uphill from main ranch house, cut into the ground, low profile.
- Administration Building – long, skinny building on existing road, workrooms, offices, small library, flex-lab prep room, adjacent to instructor housing.
- Central Plant – will be bermed to reduce visibility, buildings kept low, all the photovoltaic collectors will form the roof of the wild horse and burro facility.
- Original Ranch House – leave walls at full height but take out central structure, pour concrete for an amphitheatre area.
- Art Room – big window facing the Wilson Cliffs to take advantage of the view, won't be usable between 2-5pm in the summer, roll-down insulated shades. Designed to be as much an outside space as inside space, can enter along service road but the trail is preferred, includes a vault toilet, can be used for other purposes.

Bill Cates asked for the approximate distance from the dining area to the art room. Les said it will be about 1/3 mile.

- Wild Horse and Burro Facility – cut into a flat plain, 20,000 s.f. arena, administration facility, big wall that defines entry and supports the roof of the arena. Catwalk above the arena allows students to view what is happening down below, plus views into tack room and pasture. Actual work with animals is done outside of public eye. Possibility of a research area in the future, some of which would be visible from the catwalk. Goal is to control the environment while providing some access.

- Greenhouse – movable leuvers, adjacent to dining facility where recycling and composting can occur.

Pam Vilkin asked about garden areas on the site. Les pointed out a couple areas that have been identified. Kathy August asked where water for the fire management system will come from. Les said those details are not yet fully worked out. Pam asked if BLM will seek Leed certification for the facility? Michael Reiland responded that BLM may not formally apply for certification but believes the facility can easily meet the silver level classification. Les noted that Line and Space is budgeting for this with a 2% overlay. The big cost lies in commissioning, and a lot of documentation is required up front. Pam emphasized that Leed certification helps keep everyone on the same team from the beginning. She is frequently asked whether the RRDLC will be certified and thinks it is important for this project because it could help with marketing and fund-raising in the future. She believes the Core Group could help with commissioning responsibilities. Michael said it all depends on the budget. David Frommer noted it would be important to make the decision soon in order to know if the budget set-aside could be spent on something else.

Loretta Asay asked about long-term plans for trees on the property. Les said he would like to see non-native trees, such as the Siberian elms, removed over time and replanted with native trees. David Frommer said there should be a managed landscape program in place along with a maintenance plan. Many of the venues are designed around existing landscape features. It will be part of the operator's responsibility to revegetate, replace trees, etc.

5. Standing Reports

A. UNLV

Nancy Flagg introduced Dr. Allison Brody, project manager for the Environmental Education Strategy. Allison has been hired to work on a Conservation Initiative that will result in a strategic plan for place-based learning throughout Southern Nevada. Allison is chairing a community environmental education committee composed of agency personnel and education and interpretive staff from local museums, the county, school district, local municipalities, and educational institutions. The RRDLC will be folded into the strategic plan along with all other venues on the public lands where education and interpretation take place.

Nancy announced the hiring of Daphne Sewing to manage the Forever Earth/Wonderful Outdoor World on the Water program. Forever Earth is a science program for elementary-school students that will take place on a specially outfitted houseboat on Lake Mead. WOW on the Water is a recreational program to encourage lifelong use of the public lands among school-age children, especially those from lower socioeconomic groups.

B. BLM

Michael Reiland reported that the water issue and the statement of work for an RRDLC operator are the main issues BLM is facing right now. At the next Core Group meeting, Bob Boyd will give a report on status of water testing and sources on the Oliver Ranch site. BLM is still working on the operator statement of work and getting it through the appropriate contract-agreements staff. There is no timetable for when the statement of work will be completed, but it is moving forward. Michael noted it will be important to have an operator selected before construction starts.

6. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

7. 2005 Meeting Schedule

Michael Reiland asked for feedback on moving to an every-other-month schedule for Core Group meetings until such time as there are enough new developments to warrant monthly meetings. There was no objection to this change. Future meetings will remain on the third Tuesday of each month, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Currently, 2005 meetings have been set for

Tuesday, March 15 10:30-Noon BLM Interagency Building.

Tuesday, May 17 10:30-Noon UNLV Paradise Campus

8. New Business

Michael Johnson from BLM introduced himself as the new chair of the NEPA Committee. Pam Vilkin asked Michael Johnson to have Otak look at the Cascades Institute as a NEPA model rather than just the Islandwood School.

Paul Buck said a treatment plan needs to be prepared by BLM that outlines what will be done with the historic properties and archaeological sites. He approached Stan Rolf at BLM about creating a long-term investigation/monitoring segment that would allow RRDLC students to participate in any mitigation and plan. Michael Reiland said this would need to be coordinated with the plan for trails and how BLM wants to use the property.

Paul asked if the Educational Programs Committee could begin work on curriculum for middle school and high school students. Michael would like to hold off until the operator is selected, because the business model will ultimately dictate other uses of the center, assuming they fall within the overall mission of the school.

Tim O'Brien announced a retirement party for Mark Morse on February 18.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.